

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 903
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
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LONDON FOR SIETZ

E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID EAGR GH
SUBJECT: AID PRESS RELEASE AND BROADCASTS ON FOOD AID DRAW GOG
PROTEST

REF: USINFO WASHDC 042101Z NOV 77

1. SUMMARY. GOG HAS REACTED WITH QTE SURPRISE AND
DISPLEASURE UNQTE TO THE AID NOVEMBER 4 PRESS RELEASE
CONCERNING THE QTE SEQUESTERING UNQTE OF EMERGENCY FOOD
AID TO GHANA. NEWS OF THIS PRESS RELEASE FIRST REACHED
ALL CONCERNED HERE VIA EARLY MRONING BBAC AND VOA BROADCASTS
NOVEMBER 5. REFTEL ARRIVED ONLY MID-MORNING, WELL
AFTER BROADCASTS WERE HEARD. ECONOMIC PLANNING COM-
MISSIONER GARDINER, BY NOVEMBER 7 LETTER TO AMBASSADOR,
HAS PROPOSED THAT ALL QTE OUTSTANDING REQUESTS FOR US
EMERGENCY FOOD AID SHOULD BE SUSPENDED UNQTE. WE
WOULD LIKE TO RESPOND BY ASSURING GOG THAT WE WISH
CONTINUE OUR CURRENT DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING THE TIMING
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AND DIRECTION OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE 2,500 TONS
OF SORGHUM NOW IN STORAGE IN KUMASI. IN EFFORT TO
LIMITED DAMAGE TO US-GHANAIAN RELATIONS, AMBASSADOR AND
USAID DIRECTOR OVER WEEKEND DISCUSSED PRESS RELEASE
AND MISLEADING BORADCASTS WITH SMC SECRETARY BEECHAM
AND COMMISSIONER GARDINER RESPECTIVELY. AMBASSADOR
ALSO REVIEWED MATTER WITH COMMISSIONER OF FOREIGN

AFFAIRS FELLI EVENING NOVEMBER 7. PRIOR USAID CONSULTATION WITH MISSION HERE WOULD HAVE GREATLY EASED THIS TASK AND SOFTENED GOG REACTION. END SUMMARY.

2. SURPRISE ANNOUNCEMENT. THE US MISSION, OTHER FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES AND THE PEOPLE OF GHANA AWAKENED SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5 TO BBC'S RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT OF A DECISION BY AID ADMINISTRATOR GILLIGAN TO SUSPEND DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD AID TO DROUGHT VICTIMS IN NORTHERN GHANA. GOVERNOR GILLIGAN ALSO ORDERED THE SUSPENSION OF FUTURE SHIPMENTS OF EMERGENCY FOOD AID TO GHANA UNTIL THE GOG REASSESSED ITS PROGRAM AND REASSURED GREATER SECURITY MEASURES. BBC WENT ON TO STATE THAT THIS ACTION WAS TAKEN BECAUSE OF QTE THEFT AND CORRUPTION. UNQUOTE THE US MISSION WAS CAUGHT BY COMPLETE SURPRISE BY THE 0600 HOURS BBC BROADCAST. VOA ALSO CARRIED SIMILAR STORY ON ITS 0700 WEST AFRICA BROADCAST NOVEMBER 5. GOG OFFICIALS TELL US BBC REPEATED THE ITEM THAT EVENING AND AGAIN NOVEMBER 6 MORNING.

3. INITIAL GOG REACTION. DR. GARDINER TOLD USAID DIRECTOR THAT UPON HEARING THE BBC BROADCAST, HE WAS SHOCKED AND GREATLY DISTURBED THAT SUCH ANNOUNCEMENT HAD BEEN MADE, CATCHING THE GOG BY COMPLETE SURPRISE. THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF PRIOR CONSULTATION.
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HIS ANGER WAS MORE PRONOUNCED BECAUSE HE STATED THAT QTE MY GOVERNMENT HAD ALREADY AGREED AT END OF SEPTEMBER TO THE RETENTION OF 2,500 METRIC TONS IN STORAGE PENDING THE REASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS UP NORTH, IMPROVEMENT OF THE DISTRIBUTION NETWORK AND OTHER CORRECTIVE MEASURES. THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE AS THOUGH THE GOG HAD NOT PARTICIPATED IN SUCH DECISIONS ABOUT THE FOOD ASSISTANCE FROM THE U.S. UNQTE. DR. GARDINER FELT THAT NO USEFUL PURPOSE HAD BEEN SERVED BY SUCH A NEWS RELEASE. FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER FELLI'S REACTION TO AMBASSADOR PARALLELED DR. GARDINER'S.

4. OFFICIAL REACTION. FOLLOWING IS THE TEST OF NOVEMBER 7 LETTER HAND-DELIVERED TO AMBASSADOR FROM DR. R.K. GARDINER, COMMISSIONER FOR ECONOMIC PLANNING. BEGIN TEXT. YOUR EXCELLENCY,

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THE GOVERNMENT OF GHANA WOULD WISH YOU TO CONVEY
ITS SURPRISE AND DISPLEASURE AT THE PRESS RELEASE
WHICH THE USAID ADMINISTRATOR CAUSED TO BE ISSUED ON
4 TH NOVEMBER, 1977 ABOUT THE DISTRIBUTION OF EMERGENCY
FOOD AID IN DROUGHT AFFECTED AREAS IN GHANA.

THE PRESS RELEASE GIVES THE GIST OF A LETTER
ADDRESSED TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE SUB-COMMITTEE
ON INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND REFERS TO DISCUSSIONS
WHICH AID OFFICERS HAD HAD WITH GHANAIAN OFFICIALS.
THE EXCHANGES MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF
GHANA HAD INITIATED CORRECTIVE ACTION INDEPENDENTLY
AND COOPERATED FULLY WITH USAID OFFICIALS IN INVESTI-
GATING AND INSTITUTING REMEDIAL MEASURES, INCLUDING
THE SUSPENSION OF DISTRIBUTION PENDING THE RE-OR-
GANIZATION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY FOR COPING
WITH FOOD AID AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CURRENT
HARVEST. THE GOVERNMENT OF GHANA HAD NEVER AGREED
TO THE SEQUESTERING OF ANY FOOD AID.

IN VIEW OF SUCH A JOINT EFFORT, THE LEAST THAT
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GHANAIAN OFFICIALS MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED, IN KEEPING
WITH NORMAL PRACTICE BETWEEN SOVEREIGN STATES, WAS TO
BE NOTIFIED OF ANY ACTION THE ADMINISTRATOR INTENDED
TO ANNOUNCE RATHER THAN TO HEAR OF USAID DECISIONS

CONCERNING MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST AS A NEWS ITEM
IN A FOREIGN RADIO PROGRAMME.

THE GOVERNMENT OF GHANA HAS TAKEN DUE NOTE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR'S DECLARATION AND WOULD LIKE IT TO BE KNOWN THAT IF IT IS DECIDED TO REMOVE THE SO-CALLED "SEQUESTERED FOOD AID" FROM THIS COUNTRY NO OBJECTION OR DIFFICULTIES WILL BE RAISED. THE GOVERNMENT WISHES FURTHER TO PROPOSE THAT ALL OUTSTANDING REQUESTS FOR US EMERGENCY FOOD AID SHOULD BE SUSPENDED.

WE HAVE ALWAYS APPRECIATED THE CO-OPERATION WE HAVE HAD WITH US AGENCIES IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF MUTUAL RESPECT AND WE HOPE THAT THERE WILL BE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCH A RELATIONSHIP TO CONTINUE.

ACCEPT, SIR THE ASSURANCES OF MY HIGHEST CONSIDERATION. R.K.A. GARDINER, COMMISSIONER FOR ECONOMIC PLANNING. END TEXT. LETTER WAS COPIED TO THE SECRETARY OF THE SMC AND THE COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOR LABOR, SOCIAL WELFARE AND COOPERATIVES.

5. MISSION ACTIONS. IN EFFORT OVER WEEKEND TO LIMIT DAMAGE TO US-GHANAIAN RELATIONS, AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED ANNOUNCEMENT AND PRESS RELEASE WITH SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL SECRETARY BEECHAM ON NOVEMBER 6 AND WITH COMMISSIONER FELLI ON NOVEMBER 7. USAID DIRECTOR TOOK UP MATTER WITH ECONOMIC PLANNING COMMISSIONER
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GARDINER NOVEMBER 6; AND DCM AND ECON COUNSELOR MET NOVEMBER 7 WITH OTHER FOREIGN DIPLOMATS AND MINISTRY FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUPERVISING DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC RELATIONS, JOSEPH CLELAND. MISSION OFFICERS MADE THESE PRESENTATION ALONG FOLLOWING LINES:

A. PRESS RELEASE, ISSUED WITHOUT ADVANCE NOTICE TO US, HAD CONVEYED, PARTICULARLY AS PRESENTED BY BBC AND VOA, THE IMPRESSION, AMONG OTHERS, THAT THE LATE SEPTEMBER JOINT GOG-USG DECISION TO HOLD FINAL 2,500 TONS OF TITLE II SORGHUM IN KUMASI, HAD JUST BEEN TAKEN UNILATERALLY BY USG. (SOME LISTNERS, INCLUDING SOME FOREIGN DIPLOMATS, MISUNDERSTOOD THE ANNOUNCEMENT AND THOUGHT THAT ALL FOREIGN ASSISTANCE FROM US TO GHANA HAD BEEN SUSPENDED.) THE BBC BROADCAST, AS HEARD HERE, WAS RATHER MORE MISLEADING THAN THE VOA.

B. WE RECOGNIZED JOINT NATURE OF DECISION AND PROGRESS MADE BY GOG THROUGH CONSULTATION WITH MIS-

SION TOWARD CORRECTING SOME ABUSES, FIRST AT PORT OF TAKORADI, THEN IN TRANSPORT OF FOOD UP-COUNTRY.

C. RELEASE NEVERTHELESS REFLECTED POLITICAL REALITIES IN US WHERE ADVERSE PUBLICITY HAD LED TO CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC CONCERN OVER SERIOUS DIVERSIONS OF EMERGENCY FOOD AID -- AS WE HAD EARLIER, AND REPEATEDLY, WARNED GOG OFFICIALS IT WOULD. WITHOUT FURTHER PROGRESS ON PART OF GOG TO CORRECT DISTRIBUTION PROCEDURES AND CONTROLS, US FOOD AID WOULD REMAIN IN SERIOUS JEOPARDY.

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6. GHANAIAN PRESS SILENT. MONDAY NEWSPAPERS (THERE IS NO SUNDAY EDITION) DID NOT CARRY ANY COVERAGE ABOUT THE BBC AND VOA ANNOUNCEMENTS. AS YET, THERE HAS NOT BEEN ANY CONFIRMED NEWS COVERAGE ON THE GHANA RADIO ABOUT THE BROADCASTS. REPORTEDLY NORTHERN REGIONAL COMMISSIONER OVER GHANAIAN RADIOS STATION ACCUSED US OF QTE SLANDERING UNQTE GOG AFTER HEARING BBC BROADCAST. TO AVOID DRAWING FURTHER ATTENTION TO BROADCAST THE US MISSION HERE HAS NOT AISSUED ANY NEWS RELEASE NOR SOUGHT OUT REPORTERS TO CLARIFY THE EFFORS IN THE BBC BROADCAST.

7. COMMENTS: (A) GARDINER LETTER. THE STATEMENT THAT THE GOG QTE NEVER AGREED TO THE SEQUESTERING OF ANY FOOD AID UNQTE IS ACCURATE IF ONE USES THE

LEGAL DEFINITION OF SEQUESTERING, I.E. QTE TO TAKE POSSESSION OF (PROPERTY) AS SECURITY FOR A DEBT UNQTE. WE ASSUME IT WAS USED IN THE PRESS RELEASE IN THE SENSE OF QTE SET ASIDE UNQTE. THE GOG DID, IN FACT, AGREE TO SET ASIDE THE FINAL 2,500 TONS IN KUMASI AND HOLD UP DISTRIBUTION. CONCERNING THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROPOSAL THAT ALL OUTSTANDING REQUESTS FOR DMERGENCY FOOD AID BE SUSPENDED, WD ARENOT AWARE OF ANY SUCH REQUESTS OUTSTANDING AT PRESENT, ALTHOUGHT THE GOG RENEWED HERE ORALLY LAST MONTH ITS EARLIER REQUEST FOR ATITLE I PROGRAM.

(B) EFFECT ON U.S. GHANAIAN RELATIONS. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROUD AND SENSITIVE GHANAIAN PEOPLE AND THE US IS EXTREMELY GOOD AND SO HAS BEEN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. VOA AND BBC BROADCASTS ARE WIDELY LISTENED TO IN GHANA WHERE VIRUTALLY EVERY EDUCATIONED PERSON UNDERSTANDS ENGLISH. THE IMPRESSION THAT THE US IS SUSPENDING FOOD AID WILL NATURALLY LEAD MANY TO WONDER IF POLITICAL NOTIVATION PLAYED A PART IN THIS PERCEIVED DECISION. THIS PERCEPTION IN TURN IS OF CONCERN TO GOG LEADERS, PARTICULARLY IN THE PRESENT PRE-ELECTION ATMOSPHERE AS THE MARCH 1978 REFERENDUM APPROACHES. SUCH DOUBTS ABOUT US MOTIVATIONS WILL NOT EASILY OR QUCKLY BE REMOVED.

(C) PRIOR NOTICE. WE AGREE WITH PARA 3 OF THE GARDINER LETTER QUOTED ABOVE. IN THE FUTURE IT WOULD BE TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE US REPRESENTATIVES IN THE FIELD TO BE CONSULTED ABOUT SUCH MATTERS, EVEN POSSIBLY PROVIDING INPUT, WHERE NECESSARY, BEFORE SUCH ANNOUNCEMENTS ARE MADE, IF WE ARE TO AVOID FURTHER DAMAGE TO OUR RELATIONS WITH GHANA (AND POSSIBLY ADVERSE EFFECTS ON OUR RELATIONS WITH OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES).

8. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE TO GARDINER LETTER. WE RECOMMEND A RESPONSE TO GARDINER LETTER FROM THE AMBASSADOR WHICH WOULD INCORPORATE FOLLOWING POINTS: WE REGRET THE ABRUPT AND MISLEADING MANNER IN WHICH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE NEWS OF ADMINISTRATOR GILLIGAN'S LETTER TO CONGRESSMAN HARRINGTON WAS BROADCAST IN GHANA AND PARTICULARLY THE INACCURACIES THOSE BROADCASTS CON-

TAINED. THE PRESS RELEASE HAD USED THE WORD QTE
SEQUESTER UNQTE IN ITS COMMONLY USED MEANING OF QTE
TAKE POSSESSION QTE. THE USG HAS NEVER PROPOSED
REMOVING ANY FOOD AID FROM GHANA. THE DISTRIBUTION
OF US EMERGENCY FOOD AID IN THE UPPER AND NORTHERN
REGIONS IS CONTINUING AS JOINTLY AGREED. WE WILL CONTINUE
TO CONSULT CLOSELY WITH THE GOG ON THE POSITION
OF THE 2,500 TONS OF SORGHUM NOW IN STORAGE
IN KAMASI. WE AWAIT THE GOG'S ASSESSMENT OF ITS
DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM, INCLUDING THE HARVEST RESULTS,
THE U2B OF OTHER DONORS' FOOD AID, THE IDENTIFICATION
OF FOOD-SHORT AREAS, AND THE TIMING AND PROCEDURES OF
THE PROPOSED DISTRIBUTION OF US FOOD AID
TO THE NEEDIEST RECIPIENTS IN THOSE AREAS. WE, TOO,
APPRECIATE DR. GARDINER'S PAST AND PRESENT COOPERATION
AND ASSURE HIM OF OUR DESIRE TO CONTINUE TO WORK
CLOSELY WITH HIM IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF MUTUAL RESPECT.

9. PLEASE ADVISE.

SMITH

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Note:
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